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STAFF NOTES:

Latin American Trends

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Mexico: Terrorist Violence

Mexico is going through another periodic spurt of urban terrorist violence focused on the capital. On August 22 two naval guards and a policeman were shot to death during a flag-lowering ceremony. Earlier last week gunman burst into a cafe in Mexico City and killed three uniformed policemen as well as three civilians at another table who were apparently mistaken for plain clothes agents.

So far this year 21 policemen have been killed. Police have blamed most of the slayings on the 23rd of September Communist League, an urban extremist group that in the past has been responsible for numerous bank robberies and kidnapings. The terrorists are zeroing in on policemen, probably to get their weapons, to revenge deaths of former members at the hands of police, and to try to force repressive action by the authorities.

Following the shootings on August 22 police announced the arrest of 27 members of the 23rd of September group and claimed that the group has been virtually immobilized. Past round-ups of large numbers of its members have failed to halt its activities, however, and there is little reason to believe that this will not be the case again.

Secretary of Government Moya Palencia, while concerned at the outbreak of violence against police, has noted that these terrorist acts are minor when compared with the much broader security threats that existed three years ago. [redacted]

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